

Engineering Ethics for the Professional Engineer

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Ethics vs. Being Ethical

- What are ethics?
 - Moral principles or practice
 - Character
- How do we incorporate “being ethical” or acting in an ethical manner into our professional lives?
 - Conforming to a standard of “right” behavior

Fundamental Principles of the Code of Ethics of Engineers

Engineers uphold and advance the *integrity*, *honor and dignity* of the engineering profession by:

- Using their knowledge and skill for the enhancement of human welfare;
- Being honest and impartial, and serving with fidelity the public, their employers and clients;
- Striving to increase the competence and prestige of the engineering profession; and
- Supporting the professional and technical societies of their disciplines.

Code of Alabama, 1975, Title 34, Chapter 11

- Alabama law governing the practices of engineering and surveying.
- Chapter 330-X-14 of the Administrative Code addresses Professional Conduct (Code of Ethics).

Chapter 330-X-14

- Contains seven subsections :
 - Preamble
 - Conflict of Interest (Canon I)
 - Qualified by Education and Experience (Canon II)
 - Confidences of Clients and Employers (Canon III)
 - Practice (Canon IV)
 - Ethics (Canon V)
 - Responsibility for Conduct

Preamble to the Code of Alabama

- Ethics are required to safeguard life, health, property and welfare of the public and establish and maintain a high standard for integrity, skills and practice in engineering and surveying.
- All persons licensed shall be familiar with the code of ethics and understand them.
- *The practice of engineering is a privilege, not a right*, and
- All licensed professionals must be candid and forthright with the Board.

Canon I

Conflict of Interest

- Shall avoid all conflicts of interest with the client or employer on situations that might influence the judgments, decisions, practices or quality of services.
- Shall not solicit or accept any gratuity or material benefit of value which might compromise ability for independent judgment.
- Shall not solicit or accept work from a governmental body in which the licensee's organization serves as a member.
- In public service, shall not participate in considerations on services offered or provided by licensee and licensee's associates.

Canon II

Qualifications

- Shall practice only in fields in which qualified by education or experience.
- Shall not seal or sign any document dealing with subject matter in which the licensee is not qualified to form a dependable judgment.
- Shall be completely objective and truthful.
- Shall not engage in any other professional matter for which a specific license is required without first being licensed in that profession.

Canon III

Client and Employer Confidences

- Shall not reveal confidential or private information regarding licensee's client or employer, current or former.
- Shall not use confidences to the disadvantage of client or employer or for the advantages of a third person.
- Can reveal confidences when the consent of the client is obtained, when required by law or court order, when necessary to defend yourself or *when there is potential danger to the public's safety and well being.*

Canon IV

Practice

- Shall not offer any reward, directly or indirectly, for the inducement to secure services.
- Shall not use self laudatory advertising.
- Shall not publish any misleading information regarding education, experience, specializations or qualifications.
- *Shall not participate in procurement practices (bidding) which do not first determine the qualification of the professionals prior to entering into fee negotiations.*

Canon IV

Practice (Continued)

- Shall withdraw from further consideration for services, if the engineer cannot negotiate a satisfactory contract with the client.
- Shall not attempt to compete with another professional by reducing charges or by the use of unethical practices.
- Shall not supplant or attempt to supplant another engineer on an ongoing project.
- Shall perform work in accordance with approved standards of practice.

Canon V

Ethics

- Shall not violate any provisions of the Alabama Law or the Administrative Code.
- Shall not permit their seal to be used by an unauthorized individual, nor shall they allow their seal to be placed on a document unless it is prepared under their direct control and supervision.
- Shall not aid or abet any unlicensed person to practice engineering.
- Shall not review the work of another professional for the same employer without the knowledge or consent of the first professional.

Canon V

Ethics (Continued)

- *Shall not participate in procurement procedures for professional services where bidding is the primary consideration.*
- Shall report all know violations of the Code of Ethics to the Board.
- Shall be responsible for providing written notification to the Board of any changes in address or business affiliation within 30 days after change.

Responsibility for Conduct

- A corporation, partnership or firm shall be held responsible for the conduct or acts of its agents, employees, officers, partners or owners, licensed or non-licensed.

Consequences

- Reprimand, censure, probation, suspension or revocation of license, or fines for engineers who break the law or the licensing Board's regulations and ethics rules.

References

- National Society of Professional Engineers:
www.nspe.org
- Alabama Ethics Commission:
www.ethics.alabama.gov
- Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University: www.scu.edu/ethics/
- Federal Highway Administration:
www.dot.gov/ethics
- Alabama Department of Transportation:
www.dot.state.al.us

Conclusion

“The trouble with life isn't that there is no answer, it's that there are so many answers.”

Ruth Benedict, American anthropologist